

THE
HORNS OF CHANCE

MARGARET CHANLER ALDRICH



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The Horns of Chance





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The Horns of Chance

and other Poems

BY

MARGARET CHANLER ALDRICH



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POEMS

THE HORNS OF CHANCE

BRING me the night,
The fiery night,
With heavens ablaze
Above and below,
Let the circumscribed day
Be carried away,
'Tis a light in the eyes
Which blinds and binds
The soul alway.
We who would know
Let the close day go.

The twilights fall
With silvery call
On teeming riot.
The voices of quiet
Are tuned to each other,
As child to Mother that murmurs in sleep,
The voices of confidence sweep.

The Horns of Chance

If your soul hath a place
In eternal space
You may find it at night
In the easy flight
The spirit makes
When it first awakes
While the body sleeps.
One wondereth,
One answereth,
Another swiftly pleasure takes
In the vast appeal of night
Spread before his new-found sight.

Did I wake, or did I dream,
When I heard the Horns of Chance?
Now ringing far,
Now sounding near,
Melodious clear,
They led me forth, each note a seer.
Leading, leading out from earth,
In a wide translucent girth
Pliant to its own intent,
Unified, magnificent.
Here the Horns of Chance did blow,
Now fast, now slow,
Till their music pierced my breast,
Till I yielded with the rest,
Till through me the music ran,
I an atom in the plan,

The Horns of Chance

I an instant on the wheel,
Hindering not the lofty peal
Ringing from the Horns of Chance,
Blasting out man's impotence.

Did I wake, or did I dream?
Did I die and rise again
To the surging of that strain?
On they wound among the stars,
Upward, outward, where I heard
Ever their triumphant word,
And the soft small dawn of earth
Came to me, and dwelt with me,
But for ever left me free
Hearkening as in a trance,
Hearkening to the Horns of Chance.

Rokeby, 1907.

THE UNRECOVERED

WE ride with the ice-floe cold and stark,
Our eyes are staring on light and dark.
Our cries were hushed by the freezing breath
Which bore us along in the wake of death;
The doomed from a maiden voyage are we,
Riding south to an open sea.

Lashed to a raft or a splinter of spar,
(Mother and child, how cold we are;)

The Unrecovered

The waters have ended each earthly life,
But not the union of husband and wife;
Loving and gallant and lost are we,
Riding south to an open sea.

The icebergs follow, a lordly fleet,
The fog steals down with a winding sheet;
A passing ship gives a shuddering cry
And leaps from our ghostly company;
Gentlefolk, steerage and stokers are we,
Finding together an open sea.

We beckon no more, for our souls have rest,
While our bodies float on the sea's bright breast;
But these mute lips pray as we glide along
For the anguished hearts in the mourning throng;
Loving and unforgetting are we,
Riding Eternity's open sea.

THE LAST DREAM OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A SHIP in full sail is bringing him death.
Be calm, great winds, be calm!
Bearing down on his helplessness,
All unaware of his preciousness,
Sending him under with ruthlessness,
Be calm, great winds, be calm!

The Last Dream of Abraham Lincoln

A beautiful figure, the ship in full sail?
An ignorant phantom upon whose trail
Of lurid spumes on a deadly swell
Play for a moment the fires of Hell
Chartered to snatch from his life its palm,
The days when freedom and peace are one,
She knows not who her course hath steered,
Nor why her blanching crew hath veered
Over their prey to swerve.

But Lincoln knows she is bringing him death.
Crowding to sever from heart and nerve
The burthen of love with which they teem,
Her ghostly canvas is spread to the blast
In which his spirit shall breathe its last:
The ship in full sail is a martyr's dream.

THE COMMENT OF DEATH

ENGULPHED, or pinioned beneath fallen stone,
My latest thousands lie; from earth a moan
Rises and bids me rest.
I, who know not behest,
Who am of law the slave,
They call on me to save!
The heart of man is strange,
Stranger than death.

The Comment of Death

I am the blind resultant of a force,
 No will is mine;
 But they, the sons of men,
 Who agonize
 With piercing cries
 Over the earthquake's grave,
They pick the flower of their manhood brave
 And send it out to die;
Gone are these thousands in the lava bed,
And gone the Russian armies lately dead,
With all the answering shambles of Japan.
"Go forth," they cry, "go forth in Honour's name
 To die, first having killed."
 War's wilful flame
 Is kindled with a shout,
 But let the earth
Rending her sides take up the headsman's task.
These self-same warring nations,
 Their hearts torn
With anguish that such slaughter must be borne,
Hold one another in the fast embrace
Of love and pity, and mistrust efface.
 Strange are the ways of men,
 Stranger than death.

Or in my silent ministry at work
 Where light and air are banished,
 With the poor,
Who scatter seeds consuming as they breathe,

The Comment of Death

My harvests white and noiseless, the wan frame
Which worm-infected dies spreading disease
To hosts out-numb'ring the Sicilian dead,
Here preying, wasting Greed from house to house
Selects the shadows toiling for a crust,
The limbs of little children weak and soft
Bend to the wheels of time with cowering lung
Bearing bacilli on each freighted breath,
These are more horrible than those who die
Where seas and land are rent by cleansing flame,
For these are victims of the will of man.

Let Peace prevail,
Peace in the human realm,
Let light and air abound,
And life surround
With ghostly armour plague cannot defile;
Let men be strong and shew
How underneath the sun
There lives not anyone
To slay them in the field,
Or where the factories yield
Their man-fed products hour by working hour.
Then were the shams of years
Laid down like childish fears,
Then mind, from dreaming freed,
Monsters in leash could lead,
Which rule earth now with devastating power.

The Comment of Death

The force of wind with wave,
The germ which makes man slave.
These, not each other, not the greeds that kill
Should challenge brain and heart.
He who hath chained the light
In his meshed wires bright
Can, when he will,
Rule Nature part by part.
Gigantic forces play
Havoc on earth to-day
Which young men marching in the lists of life,
Could conquer one by one
Till speed and motion run
Their laws sublime
By man divined
The servants of his reverent command.

This is my answer to their blatant cry :
It is not Death who causeth men to die.
When every tide of earth,
Her hidden fire's birth,
Like seasons of the moon
Shall be foretold ;
When all can flee the shore
Ere a vast tidal roar
Bring darkest midnight to the tropic noon.
When man through knowledge bold,
Fearing not heat or cold,
Doth will his own existence and is free,

The Comment of Death

Then I, in chaos strong,
Death, of the Endless Throng
Now slain in danger, war, and misery,
Being the last employed
Of angels who destroyed,
(So run the words the Hebrew prophet sung)
Shall pass slow days among
The few who live too long:
The ancient gently seeking rest through me.

THE CALL OF CARLAON

CLOSE not the gates to the tomb of Carlaon,
Druids are rising on wind-bitten moors,
Up from the caverns of Cornwall and Devon
Seeking the ancient and balm-sealèd doors.

Tide-tending choristers, chaunters of mysteries,
Forest-fed silent men bearded and whole,
Priests to the sickle with vines wreathed in prophecies
Seer wraiths who gaze on the blood-sprinkled bowl.

Britain has yielded the ghosts of her ancient race
Pressed from their graves by the birth in her side;
Druids are trooping to Carlaon's resting place,
Back to the King who chose Peace for his bride.

The Call of Carlaon

“Here in a circle no arrow shall traverse,
Under the skin of a doe dead with fawn,
I, your King, wait for the end of the blood-curse,
Wait for the women through whom Peace shall dawn.

“There shall be born to us women of prowess,
Haters of dead men, lovers of life,
Mothers whose sons, knowing warfare is foulness,
Dare to be peaceful, dare to slay strife.

“Come for me then, oh Druids; let mistletoe
Keep my couch evergreen, rooted in oak,
Now from my throat let the red stream of sleep flow;
I go to my vision across your slow stroke.”

There where they laid him in ground to Peace sealèd,
Carlaon, wrapped in the sleep of the Seer,
Waits till the madness of killing be healèd;
Stirs, for the hour of woman draws near.

THE ROBBER

I

K NOW you the ballad of Harald the Norseman,
Sailing from Norway, sailing to Iceland?
Know you the story vouched by his kinsman
Sung by his daughters when minstrels are called for?

The Robber

II

Harald the Norseman, sailing for plunder,
Seizing the riches which others had gathered,
Buried his treasure winter and summer
Deep 'neath the grave of Olaf a Viking.

III

Cunningly fashioned he under the gravemound
Passages leading up from the water,
Here in the night time brought he his plunder,
Men who sailed with him followed but lost him.

IV

Here in the darkness knew he his children
Borne by Elfrida, daughter of Vikings;
Here had she trembled much at her coming,
Here had she tended the gold and her offspring.

V

Sailing to Iceland, Harald the Robber
Cried to his helmsman "Now shall I perish,
Now in the heavens see I my victims,
Now in the water surges my dying.

VI

"I who have plundered the Scotch and the English,
I, who have buried them deep in the ocean,
Back into Norway steer with my corse now,
Back to the grave of Olaf the Viking."

The Robber

VII

Little the helmsman recked of the victims,
Fast did he steer from the breath of an iceberg,
Dawn found him fleeing close unto Norway,
Dead lay the Robber, clasping his sword hilt.

VIII

Up to the grave of Olaf the hero
Secretly drew he the body of Harald,
Fearful the helmsman of death should he falter,
Dreading ghost vengeance in Harald his master.

IX

Into the gravemound hurriedly driving,
Lo! from before him crumbled it inward,
Down sank the Viking anciently buried,
Down sank his bones to the dwelling of Harald.

X

Up with a clamour sprang the blind children,
Up from among them rose the wan Mother,
"Who hath come hither troubling our hiding?
These are the children of Harald the Robber."

XI

Then to the loud call wound by the helmsman
Gathered the strong men, gathered the fearless,
Never in Norway, home of the clear-eyed
Knew men such horror, felt men such pity.

The Robber

XII

Slow spoke a kinsman of Harald the Robber :
“Sunk is the Viking, scattered his bones now,
Here lay we Harald and level the gravemound,
Up into sunlight leading his children.

XIII

“Widen to seaward sand cleft and chasm,
Here let the high tide rattle the treasure,
Here let the low tide bear it from Norway;
Fearful this plunder with Olaf’s dishonour.

XIV

“And for these blind ones, they shall be singers,
Teach them the Sagas, loved by our old men.”
Soft said Elfrida, daughter of Vikings
“Long have they known them down in the darkness.”

XV

But of the sagas sung by her children,
Tales of the great ones, heroes in Norway,
This sang they oftenest, this sent men wondering
Back to their children, back to their homehearths.

CAIN

WHY do I wander, why for ever move?
I seek my brother Abel whom I slew.
He may be on the mountain top or hid

Cain

Beneath the thicket where the rivers run.
I slew him angered that I might be free
Of his perfections. I was always wrong,
He pleased our God. Of every little thing
He knew and liked the laws, young beasts which mew
Fawning to lick the hand were his mild choice.
I, wrestling with the snake, would strive to tear
The slimy coil apart, or on the horns
Of a spent beast I'd throw my weight and hang
Until he groaning sank to earth with me.
All this it seemed was not as what I should do,
Less should I drive the breath from Abel's face
And lay him slain never to rise again.
My Mother! how she gazed with stricken eyes
From me her son, to him her son now mute!
I saw his was no slaying of a herd,
A hillside rotting 'neath a thousand boars
Held no such solemn silence as this boy
So still, and yet so lifelike at our feet.
Abel had always covered up the dead.
He sang to them, calling the earth their bed,
Their darkness sleep; so we within the rock
Laid him and watched for many days without
Lest he should rise and speak to us again.

It was my Mother's fancy, Adam sat
Or stood for hours saying not a word;
But from his eyes to mine came black contempt.
I was half minded to have slain him too.

Cain

One night I wandered till I dropped asleep,
Abel came up and touched me on my hand.
"Come forth," he said, "to find me,
I am far, the earth is longer than your years shall be.
Leave Adam to my Mother, I will lead
Your steps to Edens and to herds which tear
Out gorges with courageous thundering hoofs."
"Art thou not dead within thy favourite cave?"
He smiled and said "Go back and I am there,
But if thou follow 'neath the morning sun,
Forever toward the sun, and never back,
Then mayest thou know my freedom and the world."

I waked and followed, as the tracks of beasts
Were wont to lure me, now my brother led,
And doth lead still; oft have I thought to stay
But when the sun sets thrice in the same place
I know I shall be wandering at dawn.
'Twixt brothers lies such close companionship
They are not joined with words nor can a blow,
Though it be hurled by death, divide their lives.
Abel doth ever visit me in dreams.
I felled his body, his too gentle hand
I stilled from foolish tasks 'mid ewes and lambs,
He loves me none the less, showing me all
I had not thought to see beneath the sky.

So onward while the King thy Father sleeps,
Should he pursue me he will think I fled

Cain

Back to my kinsmen, and into the North
Bury the arrows which should pierce my hide.
Weep not, thou couldst not follow, and he soon,
Needing a son to tend his bulls and spears,
Will find one fit to lead thee from the feast.
I am no husband such as Adam was.
I, Cain, am Abel's brother, and with him,
Who knows the laws of travel without limbs,
Of life without his body in the cave,
I, like the sun, do move across the world.

THE WOMAN WHO TOLD ON THE DEAD

THEY haunt me not, for they have no life;
Powerless, stupid they lie in vaults
Where relatives put them husband and wife,
With a decorous wish to ignore their faults.

But the heart of Nature forbids my rest,
I who have ruthlessly told on the dead.
When Nature gathers a man to her breast
Over his weakness her strength is spread.

When they died I thought it was safe to tell,
I sought out the young who shrank ashamed
From me and my tale, but they learned it well
For the dead they had childishly loved they blamed.

The Woman who told on the Dead

Then Nature began to punish me.

She sent the wind to keep me awake,
My shade trees creaked most fearfully,
I never again saw my face in the lake,

Always the water was troubled and low,
Always came wind when I longed to sleep,
Where I had made a wilderness glow
When my heart was broken, I now must reap

Contempt from Nature for having told
The horrible sins of the helpless dead.
Defenceless, mute, in the silent cold,
I robbed them of peace, and my own peace fled.

By a seaside strange I took a room,
None knew me here to guess my pain;
There was sullen reproach in the surge's boom,
And sea fogs followed me up the lane

To make me a thing so poor and dank
I locked my room forever, and then
Went out to wander until I sank;
But Life-savers make me repeat again :

I am only the woman who told on the dead,
The woman whom Nature cannot forgive.
I may not take back the words I have said,
While men remember my sin must live.

A Requiem

A REQUIEM

HE too hath suffered at the hands
Of Time the leveller,
Who tossed death cap and bells,
Calling him reveller,
He who could fill his mind,
And then his glass,
Nor mix the two contents
While planets pass,
Is grimly talking of the gout,
And how old age hath found him out.

A little irksomeness in joints
Disturbs him dawnsings.
The prosiness of other men
Brings frequent yawnings,
This long-time champion
For leads unbroken
Hands down his score to boys
Now Time hath spoken:
Hath warned him in the soft demur
Of the first man who call him Sir.

IN AN OLD GRAVEYARD

SINCE death must be here let me lie
Among the graves of long ago.
These gentle mounds and mossy stones
Have lost the sense of human woe.

In an old Graveyard

The youngest burthen in this field
Has known a century of sleep;
To this small pasturage of God
There come no stricken files to weep.

The little children who look down
From scattered farms among the hills
Rest elsewhere, when they too are old
And leave the sum of human ills.

No name, no date, at head or foot,
Carve but this legend on my stone:
"He knew the world and chose to lie
Where earth and heaven are all alone."

PSYCHICAL RESEARCH

GHOSTS and phantoms, still ye reign
Godlike in the human brain.
Banished from the world of sense
Mind is your omnipotence.
Sight and touch hath both defied you,
Century-haunted halls denied you,
Like the strong man undefeated
To your stronghold ye retreated.

Psychical Research

Lightly flitting from the scenes
Which were counted your demesnes,
Who would walk a moonbeam cold
Where the murdered turned to mould,
Who would charm the mumbled drone
Of a harm-engendering crone,
If by passing into mind
Place and power he could find?

Here where proof is unavailing,
On the scoffer loudly wailing
Soft your magic ye can fling,
Like the ancient fairy ring;
Now a spectre, now a dream,
Half a tale which true doth seem,
Come or vanish as ye will
Mortals own ye rule them still.

Waked or sleeping none may go
Where a ghost he cannot know.
When your tricks a brain invade
Thought and motion must be stayed
Waiting on your ill-timed leisure
Like a sick man in a seizure,
Only here no skill of leech
Can the trembling victim reach;
Fast he holds within his brain
Ghostly voice and phantom train.

The Strong Knight

THE STRONG KNIGHT

LOOK where the Strong Knight led his love to
rest !

Not to his Mother's duty-haunted bower,
Not to a couch of myrtle sweet with flower
Fed by the April sun where locusts nest.

The knight had downy fur from couchèd breast
Brought low before his singing arrow's power
On which to lay his Love when sleep's strange hour
Caused her small feet to falter in their quest.

But not on fur slumbered her lovely head :
Beneath the yew tree to the sculptured dead
Strode the Strong Knight, as though a greater peace
Waited where none his valiant rest did dream,
There, where his life did most eternal seem,
He watched the stars above his limbs at ease.

HYMN TO LIBERTY

WHAT is the name supreme
By which men pray to thee,
Thou implicit form of God?
Men call thee Liberty.

Handmaiden unto life,
The air, the light is thee,
Often thou vanishest
In multiplicity.

Hymn to Liberty

For thee the dead can smile
And unborn children rest
Upon their pilgrimage,
Contented in thy breast.

The fetters men devise
Make mimic charts of time,
The joy of living lies
In knowing law sublime.

Thy mask is in a wind,
Thy voice in every star,
The sky hath held my hand,
I know not near from far,

Through thee my life obeys
The law which makes a world.
Who knows not Liberty
Is toward oblivion hurled ;

Who, ignorant himself,
Loves Fear and Tyranny
Drops below light and power
And curses life made free.

Cowed thousands turn the wheel
Of mock authority,
One soul can enter heaven
Alone with Liberty.

Into the Void

INTO THE VOID

INTO the Void my spirit passed
And there I compassed treasure vast.
The riches of the unassailed,
The love which knows not it hath failed,
The shadow of a large caress
Hung over empty nothingness.

Within the Void my spirit leapt
As though it hitherto had slept.
I saw the garment of my years
Shaped to the exigence of fears
Fall, and my liberated breast
Slipped 'neath the seamless folds of rest.

Out from the Void I have been sent.
Again I know the firmament.
Again I feel beneath my feet
The quiver of the incomplete,
Again the shimmer and the song
Break for each dawn the night so strong.

But all of these are now a dream.
The hushed unchallenged Void doth seem
To be a womb of such intent
That when its mystery is rent,
When God shall will such power free,
All that is less must cease to be.

Memorial Stanza

MEMORIAL STANZA

LOVELY the stars whose climbing brings us rest,
Out of earth's dark we watch th' illumined way,
More glorious those that forward bear each quest
Their orbits marching with our working day.
Beyond all clouds and far above the sun
Who sets our tasks, these tireless servants shine.
Anne Fitzhugh Miller made me think of one
When her life-furthering eyes looked into mine.

TO THE BEST

OH! Sweet are the songs of the Greeks and the
Latins,
The music abiding in lyric and ode,
Be their subject the gambolling of ewe lambs at matins,
Or dirge for the King in an antiquate mode.

They conjured the whispers of breezes and billows,
The feet of the maiden, the flush of sunrise,
To wander or pause through their forms and their
phrases:
'Tis Life they imprisoned in rhythmic disguise.

'Tis Life whom they wooed, she hath shewed them her
secrets,
They craved a caress, and her heart she disclosed,

To the Best

While cold are our patterns and copies and reasons,
When we write not as lovers whose pulse is imposed.

We stumble o'er language where ancients untrammelled
Hailed gods as they ran in the metrical race,
We see not the Vision, we hear not her laughter,
Then why should she lend us the spell of her grace?

As children grow weary with dolls of their making,
And turn to the knees of a Mother who sings,
We throw down our ill-shapen lifeless endeavours
To dream in the classics the dreams which have wings.

There forever the poet is priest to his victim,
There youth lights a torch at the lamp of a sage,
Where immortal the poem, eternal the picture,
From Rome and from Greece speak the arts to our age.

They say unto us as they said to the Persians,
"Impatient Barbarians, makers of slaves,
See life as it is, pose not as a tyrant
And legions unconquered will march through your
staves."

AN OLD STORY

HER PART

I LOOKED upon the sunlight and was glad,
Before thou stoodst between me and the sun.
Soft lute notes played at dawn could make me fly

An Old Story

To my companions till thy song I heard,
Thy song of arms and speed, strong call to men.
Ah! If my chamber had been toward the West,
Toward the West where no white road winds on,
Where only sheep boys stumble with their flocks,
I had known peace until I had known death.
But now, while thou art forth, while kings in pawn
Await thy coming, I toward the East
Have gazed long summers and long winters through.
Children have come to lie within the arms
Of tire-women, but I speak with none;
For thee I watch, for thee my lips discourse
The only welcome I know how to give,
For thee my prayers untaught would beggar heaven.
To this small castle guided in the wars,
Thou camest a wanderer. Having learned the way
Thou must return, else were my love in vain,
Vain as yon cloud from dust that is not thine.

THE QUEEN'S PART

He loves me not! Yet I surprised his heart,
None other knows the secret of his dreaming.
She knoweth naught, poor fool, she knoweth naught,
Long lost or dead her vagrant lover deeming.
With none to cry "Your prayers have made you part
Of every mesh in which his life is caught."
She knoweth naught upon her little hill,
Yet while she prays no fiend can work him ill.

An Old Story

So was I loved by that poor boy who leapt
On baying hounds to save me when we strayed
Young and alone, aye, noble yet alone;
How I a novice on his heartstrings played!
But though to-night this babble hath betrayed
To me the secret this man's dreams have kept,
He loves me not; and so have I loved none.
Ah, maiden fading on your little hill,
A Queen I yield to you whose prayers can move
The fangs of death to spare the man you love.

HIS PART

Nay, Lady, when I love think not to see
Another crown among the jarring queens,
Another state pieced out of blood-soaked lands.
For me the road to love lies far aside
Where days are years and years are only marked
When boys turn men.

My grandame held a book

Well pictured wherein we might sometimes see
Both Paradise and Hell; but most I craved
A cunning vision of a little hill
On which a saint in tiny tower dwelt
'Mid toyish fields minioned by lamb and dove;
Prancing below upon a ribboned road
Passed unaware a jocund valiant knight.
Much I despised this purblind dolt who looked
Not up at one who smiled the while she prayed;
And once, long ere your highness came a queen

An Old Story

Among the battles of your Husband's court
I found my saint! Nay Lady! Ask not where,
I only know that thrice in grip with death
I have lain down, once tricked by Turkish sands,
Once stoned in Tartary, and last upon
A bastion in the North. Always my saint
Has come to me, half missal and half girl,
Smiling to bid me forth! Once I essayed my thanks
But much they troubled her as when I passed
Her father's portal, all those years ago.

You bid me seek her out? That may not be;
I must secure this tribute for the King,
And then across the seas to Barbary.
I would be ill at ease quartered at home,
Old age or wounds must lead me when again
I seek her shelter. She is mine, I hers.
Such fancies hold more marriage than is found
Within the lives of many early wed.

DE PROFUNDIS

HOW blest the day when from thy shore
A boat first passed to mine!
How more than blest the waves that lisped
They too were thine, were thine.

De Profundis

The birds which from thy groves have flashed
Fly back again to nest,
And from thee come the broods of young
Who flutter here to rest.

We ask not that our beaches join,
That wave and tide be gone,
For far below the waves and light
We mingle and are one.

MUTUAL

WALKING with the children I heard a skylark
sing:

The stars shone out in daytime, angels were listening,
But low the curly heads were bent with laughter
whispering.

From where my children gathered the skylark soared
away.

Oh bird, have you no soul to see that these be gods at
play?

Not knowing or not caring he vanished in the day.

DISINTERESTED

I SAW Love crossing in the blue,
Idly I thought "Now whither flying?"
Love heard and seemed to answer "You,"
Then hovered where your fields were lying.

Disinterested

“Oh! Is my neighbour home?” I thought,
Behold together through my gate
They came, each saying “I have brought
A guest who should not have to wait.”

WITH THE CHILD'S CURL

NO fiery planets burning on their way
These fifty years spun such mysterious ray,
Nor can we on your golden-wedding day
From mine or jewel bring a bright assay,
Like this which in her lively gleaming strand
One grandchild bears from the Creator's hand.

IRISH SONG

TWO lovers sat watching the fire at night time,
Low were the embers and gentle the flame,
Hours were passing yet neither was speaking,
Foolishly thinking their thoughts were the same.

On the red ashes she gazed like a dreamer,
Light filled her eyes as she counted a charm.
He, breathing softly, saw little babes sleeping,
One in each shadow caressed by her arm.

“Sure it is true since we made it together,”
Clear came her voice as together they rose,
Quickly he left her—the lane took his answer—
“Coals do be telling what nobody knows.”

The Fanciful Maid

THE FANCIFUL MAID

HE

ARE there no words whose hold on life
Do take your heart in fee?
If I made bold to call you wife
Should we not wedded be?

SHE

The world is full of words unhorsed
That bring no meaning home,
They ring like swords at weddings crossed,
Not thus my heart will come.

HE

Are there no deeds to make you mine,
No circle for my feet,
Where he who walks shall take and twine
Your life in his complete?

SHE

A circle may be filled with light,
Such draw the Cherubim,
But out of more is spilled the night
With evil sucking brim.

HE

Since words and deeds leave thee afraid
Then give me signs and dreams,
If what is real doth grieve a maid
We'll ride the moony beams.

The Fanciful Maid

SHE

Ah, now my heart chimes yes, and yes ;
For now your heart perceives
That love abides above the stress
Of good or evil lives.

They are the level of our ways,
Such facts as Life and Death,
But love above their power plays :
For love imagineth.

OPHELIA'S MOMENT

STRIP, strip the leaves from every waving wand !
Let not the flaunting willows mark my woe.

Their peeping plumes have seen my hot tears flow
Strip, strip the leaves from every waving wand.

See how they slip and flutter to my feet !

Oh ! willow, willow !

Lo ! an easy pillow

For Hamlet and Ophelia must you make.

He is your King ! Lie down

You little leaves ! Lie down

That when he comes 'twill be soft rest to take.

Ophelia's Moment

What was it Hamlet said?
A willow on my head?
He thought I plagued him for a silly crown!
'Tis sad remembering,
His anger made me weep,
And now I cannot sleep.
Who dares to pull the willows of the King!

She vanishes. HAMLET enters

I, Hamlet, mouthing wisdom on the wind—
What! willows piled against my weariness?
This is Ophelia's cunning, she will hide
Being a maiden: Oh! sweet Modesty!
'Tis thou procurest peace for man, not love:
Love wearies me: it is a neighbour's child,
A new conceit: Love is a neighbour's child.

He sleeps. OPHELIA re-enters

Dead! Hamlet's dead and no man knoweth it!
I'll quickly tell the water: Hamlet's dead.
Ophelia found him and did sing his soul to highest
Heaven,
Laid this mete cross
Upon his breast but did not shed one tear—
No, not one tear.

HAMLET

(Aye, that's the game—I'm dead.)
Stir not, Ophelia, 'tis my spirit speaks;
Now tell me what is death?

Ophelia's Moment

OPHELIA

Why, Hamlet, 'tis to die
To be a soul, to fly between the prayers
Of saintly men.

HAMLET

Egad, a tennis ball were weightier !

OPHELIA

Nay, Prince, I pray not so,
Vex not thy dying with the toys of earth ;
But fly with me : Hist, I must sleep to die :
To die and wake with thee, oh Happiness !

She sleeps and HAMLET quickly leaves her.

ODE TO KEATS

L OVED Poet ! Slowly reading
Upon a scholar's quest,
Each rhyme and accent heeding
To seething beauty prest ;
The pulses rise with treading
Such vintage at its best,
My kindled mind is speeding
Upon thy Spirit's quest.

Where didst thou take thy singing?
Where is thy Spirit now ?
A lambent aura flinging
On all that thou dost know ?

Ode to Keats

Past pain and death upspringing,
Hast thou forgotten how
Thy song to earth was bringing
The sweetest chimes that blow?

Thought smiled on thee so tender
From so retired a place,
Rich gardens thou didst render
To shrine her slightest trace;
Thy briefest dream bore splendour
Unto our paling race.
Can further life engender
Thy speech and song of grace?

Where flash prismatic colours
On some titanic glass,
Where iridescent pallors
Weave prairies of wan grass,
'Mid ghosts of earthly dolours
A sad inverted mass,
Are men and loves thy gaolers
Or may thy Spirit pass?

Thou wert of Life's beginnings,
Oh soon-regretted youth!
Quickly I see thee winging
Thy way 'mid joy and ruth,

Ode to Keats

Toward raptures born of clinging
To innocence and truth,
Where songs are had for singing,
Where speech is ever sooth.

Not 'mid the dead long haunted
By unachievèd fears,
Thy eager life transplanted,
Unto my thought appears;
Thy choruses are chaunted
By souls unborn, and spheres
Before thine eyes undaunted
Make pageants of high years.

LOVE REMEMBERED

I HAD no slaves to hymn thy lovely name
In leaping metres with dance-weaving feet;
I, who stand low upon the steps of life,
Hearing no chorus but the trodden street.
Yet, like a king, I crown the headlands proud
With thy wind-stirring name, for now when sails
Of blustering mariners harry the bright foam
They cry "The unshrined goddess here presides!"

'Tis thus I found a way to give thee power
Over the hearts of men: teaching thy name
To all who touch our shores, I, the blind beggar, cry

Love Remembered

"Art thou, art thou, the goddess Lalage?"
Some strangers say, "No brother," with a laugh,
While others pause to query, "Who is she?"
Often the townsmen answer, "We have lost
Some shrine this blinded beggar loved when young."

Wert thou immortal when the olives stirred
And I approached thee with a lamb at dawn?
An uncouth shepherd lad from Thessaly
Who tended flocks upon thy father's lawn,
My gods have blessed me since I make thy fame;
Not he thy husband or thy princely sons.
This my love whispers to thee in chance hours;
Now must I shout, for close a scholar runs:
Art thou, art thou, the goddess Lalage?

EMERSON

I NEED a child, stern Nature said,
To voice those truths by which I live.
Let Time be father to his muse
While I the meed of purpose give.

And from the heart of nature came
A spirit worthy of her life,
Who for his Mother swiftly wrought
A miracle on human sight.

Emerson

Men owned his majesty ; his smile
Like music floated forth from him.
So pure was beauty to his soul
She scrupled not to dwell with him.

And since the cycle of his days
Drew near the earth ere slaves were freed,
He chose high lists for self-defence
Against authority's dark greed.

Like star dust fell his eloquence,
A trail of light on minds long chained
Beneath the fetters yoked to Death
Which hierarchy hath maintained.

Converging truths impelled his thought
Through homely phrase or scholars' rede,
He spoke the softer speech of song
To those who know a poet's need.

From Time he bore what hath been done,
From Nature that which should have been,
And from them both he shewed us plain
Why what we call our fate is dim.

He bade us take our earthly wills,
And lead them forth in nature's way ;
Sweet children subjected to laws
Which none may lightly disobey.

Emerson

A strange new wine of worship flowed
From him on all that God hath wrought.
With rainbow light his witness spans
The human skies of human thought.

FAME TO E. A. POE

NOT in marble, not in stone,
Should thy lyric name be found.
Vowed to free and ample sound,
Heaving waves and quagmire moan,
Far from ordered porch or fane
Moved thy meteoric strain.

Who from silent urns of state
Could thy melody evoke?
Tuned at birth to hear the stroke
Wrought by rhythms adumbrate
Out of earth and sea and heart,
Thy sweet voice was nature's art.

To thy fancy breathed the mist,
Spirits to thy longing passed.
Thou couldst wind the Death King's blast,
Keep with memory a tryst
Dear as that love holds with youth,
Simple as a sweet child's truth.

Fame to E. A. Poe

Never in the hall of fame
Do such spirits fettered stand.
Shone a moonbeam on a strand
To the world where none hath name,
Quickly gliding thou wouldst sing
Staves of passion's ordering.

Poet of the pulsing word
Both thy speech and race may die,
Not thy strange song's harmony;
Fragments are the tones there heard
Of the powers which consume
Song and lover outre-tomb.

KNOWLEDGE

I WATCHED two lovers following the shore,
They saw me not but warmed me with their joy:
Yet soon I felt much colder than before.

Long years sweet children looked to me for bread,
All that I had was turned to children's food:
Then suddenly their hands stretched past my head.

I loved my Country breeding every son
To hold their service dearer than our lives:
They died and in their fight the gamblers won.

Knowledge

Another's joy, the children at my breast,
A patriot's honour, all have left me poor:
What in the end bringeth my spirit rest?

The knowledge that result with cause is cast,
Being of equal greatness: I but serve
Empty or filled, some fragment of laws vast.

OLD QUEEN'S SONG

THE mountains are sinking,
The rivers are shrinking,
Ever the marshes grow deeper and wide.
Ever the waste land,
The desert and quicksand,
Are covering over the valley's green pride.

When I was a maiden
The hill-side was laden
With cornlands that rivalled the gold of my dower;
'T would be morning ere stars rose
To peaks with the long snows
Which marked for the stranger our King's ancient
power.

The sun like a lover
Would win us to cover

Old Queen's Song

Where bowers of honeybloom swung 'neath the bee;
Where tides ran their quickest
The fish swam their quickest,
Our fishermen stood by the nets to the knee.

Now all have grown dreary,
The bird on its eyrie
The Queen in her keep and the Prince where he rides.
The old can but mumble
As they watch the young stumble
"From Heaven or Hell comes this curse on our pride?"

Some said 'twas the killing
In truce, or the spilling
Of guest-blood when wine drove the knights to the
sword.
Some said the ground languished
Because the poor anguished,
And one that the King had been false to his word.

But I saw the girl die,
And stifled her child's cry,
Nor felt my heart beat as I made their one grave.
I know my son's madness
And his weak son's sadness,
And the mountains that shrink are because I was brave.

Ode to Touraine

ODE TO TOURAINE

TOURAINE! Thou valley of wars and wine,
Green are thy fields, thy ways are broad;
Swift rivers have washed thy bloody skirts,
Now only a vintage stains the sward.

But even of old, when Honour rode fast
Lest Valour at large escape his lance,
Booty nor death could thee deface
Thou who wert ever the smile of France.

The stones of Touraine are smooth and white
Like hands kept pure by the folds of prayer,
Fashioned to chapel or turret or wall,
Grace of perpetual youth they wear.

Flashing a welcome by forest and stream
Tower and vaulted gallery stand;
Gestures are theirs of women who wait
For the Lords to return to the land.

Plashing about them the rivers meet,
Mirror their beauty, murmur and pass,
As they passed long since when Diane leaned
With silvery smile to the Loire's deep glass.

Touraine! Touraine!
'Tis the heart of thy bird

Ode to Touraine

Beats to thy fame!
In the sycamore tree
I heard him at eve,
Pouring his song
To thee, to thee,
In an ecstasy.
Like the sun on the moat
Was thy name in his throat,
Where it sinks to rest
On Chenonceau's breast,
Where the ivy-kissed wall
Curves to the fall
Of the light from the West.

Touraine! Touraine!
He is singing again!
Always, only of thee,
From a mist ridden vale,
Throughout the twilights pale
Doth he challenge the stars for thee.

MÉLISANDE

HAVE you heard Mélisande
With her web of golden hair
Spin a vague and tuneful song,
One that shimmers on the air
In long lines, folded lines,
Sound on sound as though 'twas there

Mélisande

Like the sea, through all time,
And you have but to draw near
To feel, to see, or hear,
That she holds a trembling snare
Of which she is unaware?

Nothing knowing, Mélisande
Draws all brothers with her song.
She is never of their past,
Unto none can she belong;
Be they widowed and alone,
Be they young with life to come,
Each can see that his shade
Has been thrown across her hair,
Each will chime, for a time,
With her sweet and airy voice,
Which knows neither wish nor choice,
Which is free because forgetting,
Which is true because it bears
Every sombre wish of theirs
For an instant in the strand
Which is braided while they stand
Till their outlines are all blurred
In her sudden untaught word,
When they find themselves expressed
And are bound to Mélisande.
Have you heard Pelleas say
"I am going" day by day?
Were you by when Golaud cried

Mélisande

"She is far, too far, away"?
They had hurt her, guessing never
That she was the stream of life,
Now a tide and now a mirror,
She would be where Pelleas went—
Did it matter if he stayed?
It was Golaud who was far
From this plangent captive star
Which knew not the minds of men,
But expressed them while she sang.

She must float away at dawn,
Mélisande,
Like the vapour from the rain,
Like the sound within the tide
When it leaves the brief beach-side,
And we find the gleaming snare
Was not woven from her hair
(That was starlight and is gone),
But from her divining tone
Which persists as though our own,
Not by strong men steeled to measure
All they can extort from treasure,
Those who lay a snare for her
When they ask her to aver
Love is aught it should not be to Mélisande.

For there has not come a day
When the hunter by the way

Mélisande

Will set free his captive prey,
When strong love within the heart
Does but ask a beauteous part
Without passing through the head
Whence the cruel words are said.
Not to earth has come a time
When the souls of men may chime
When they may reflect each other
As the waters do the skies,
Without any mad surprise,
Without any thought of self
Or its small insensate pelf.

Now no man may be expressed
Without wanting for himself
What belongs to everyone.

INVOCATION TO NIGHT

SPIRIT of the night's sweet air,
Where art thou?

Eve descends, the timid shades

Creep towards each other,
Stars on one other shine,
We want thee, for we are thine.

Bring'st thou dreams, or must we wait
Drowsily

Invocation to Night

For thy sweet unerring flight
Through our senses? He who sleeps
Where thou comest may not know,
He who wakes shall feel thee go.

Feel thee go, but on his brow
Dost thou leave
Dews of morning,—in his eyes
Earlier light than earliest dawn,
He some filmèd song hath caught,
From thy passing music-fraught.

It is thou, delicious night,
Who dost bring
To the world its destinies.
Day fulfilleth,
But the night
Ordereth, what is to be:
He who wakes receiveth thee.

WASHINGTON'S FENCES STAND

TO the summit of Middle Mountain,
Up the Massanuttan range,
Surveyors came in Government's name,
Looking for errors to change.

But the boy who had been before them
Is our Government's guiding hand,
A technique new found nothing to do:
Washington's fences stand.

Washington's Fences Stand

He was faithful alone on the mountain,
Faithful in eye and brain,
To the line discerned where a forest turned,
Concealing river and plain.

A boy of nineteen with a compass,
Trusted by Lord Fairfax,
Like a giant at ease he blazed his trees,
From the saddle, with long-poled axe.

Did the Appalachians mould him
While he measured their rude estate?
By some bonfire's glare was he first aware
That his Country must soon grow great?

We have come with high power transits
To the Shenandoah's side:
She has not swerved since her hero curved
The line of her lofty pride.

Let the Nation rejoice at this omen,
We are still 'neath our Chief's command,
Though our lines are long, true-level and strong
Washington's fences stand.

Note.—In 1751 Lord Fairfax commissioned a lad of nineteen to survey the wilderness of the Virginia hills. Government surveyors have just made a fresh report and have found the work perfect.

George Washington, running his lines with primitive instruments and bonfires on hilltops, left monuments and boundaries in which technically educated surveyors using high-power transits and all the refined modern instruments, have been able to find no variation.

Eva

EVA

HER eyes were dark in a white, white face,
Which grew like a fawn's on the neck of grace,
A child of the roads with her feet in the dust
None stared so long at me.

Was my walk at ease what she liked to see?
For one babe on her hip, and two at her knee,
She gravely divided the grimy crust,
And stared like a star at me.

Brother and sister, nephew and niece,
She tended them all in a wide-eyed peace,
To the holes of her rags their hands were thrust,
While she gazed on the world through me.

I would think with a shudder of what must come
When another vagrant entered that home,
And another brood sprang out of the dust,
To stare with her eyes at me.

But those eyes have closed in a saintly sleep,
To which no evil thing can creep.
Now her grave is under the snowy crust,
Who looked so long on me.

Summer and winter I'll walk that way,
Children will greet me or scatter away,
And I'll always remember those eyes of trust,
That were looking towards death past me.

Quaker Corners

QUAKER CORNERS

FOUR Quakers waited on a road
Sometimes they spoke, but oftener not,
The garter snake and common toad
Did not disturb their feet one jot.

I watched them from my southern porch,
I wanted them to come and rest,
But you do not invite a torch
And by their flame my spirit dressed.

Four Quakers waiting all day long,
Upon some errand of the soul.
It made the hedgerow scent more strong
To have them there so calm and whole.

I know not why they went or came,
But when I look across the grass
The roadway does not seem the same.
For something strange has come to pass.

Just where those four-square Quakers stood
Upon some errand Heaven found,
Their image has been raised for good,
And dogs who see things walk around.

Three Wise Men

THREE WISE MEN

AS I was homeward walking
Across a world in tune,
I heard two wise men talking
"What is there new in June?"

"What is there new in June?" I cried,
And here a cuckoo fluttered,
"Where are your eyes, O great and wise,
What nonsense have you uttered?"

One said, "We hoped great things from Brown,
He is so persevering,
But what is new proves rarely true,
Impatience interfering."

I plunged my hands into the earth,
And drew out budding lilies,
I threw them sweet, before the feet
Of those astonished sillies.

One gave the Latin name, and said
"A false hybridization,
Geranium shoot can take club root
In single segregation."

Three Wise Men

Again I heard the cuckoo mock,
And he who was the greater
Said, "In July we're printing my
New slant of the Equator."

As I was slowly walking,
Across the world in June,
I learned that to be talking
Is not to be in tune.

I did not write these verses then,
But in a drear December,
When even those two Spring-blind men
Are pleasant to remember.

THE GOLDEN DAY

I ENTERED the heart of a golden day
And saw this world through a blaze of light.
Weed and wastrail, flushed and gay,
Saluted the hours that made them bright.

A plough-horse stood at the sky-line blue,
His steaming flanks made the heavens burn,
The hill beneath to a pedestal grew
Furrowed with legends for seeds to learn.

The Golden Day

Fragments of life, the tired and old,
Lightly lay by warmth possessed;
A slumbering child in a patch of gold
Breathed the ritual of rest.

Glory and peace went softly by
To a further dawn in some underworld;
But over my landscape ever fly
The flags of courage that day unfurled.

CUBIST CONTRE

WHEN on the desert sand with sand is whirled,
And in its barren folds the Saint is furled,
He cries that now his soul can understand;
Yet all that moved him was a little sand.

His eyes are blinded by vast hosts drawn near,
Rocks long his shelter shine as crystal clear,
Their enclosing rhythms in a giant dance
Bringing the anchorite an holy trance.

He wakes past knowing that the light is gone
Though with it went the life from every stone;
Again harsh outlines stand but give no sign;
It was a light that made them seem divine.

Cubist Contre

Wind over sand, upon the rocks a gleam,
So may man pass from nature to a dream,
With tricks of transposition cheat his brain,
Then shout that he has made life's riddle plain.

Great Life ignores confusion; mysteries
Of being are not hid in sorceries,
Illusion bears no issue to a quest,
Monstrosity can never give the breast.

Old is this world and worn with many a shame,
Glib fools are born Creation to defame,
But in each flower budding to a Spring
We find that power which made the first child sing.

To lovers comes the lowly stooping Past
Before their passion reverent. Quick cast
The man-to-be upon the lap of youth,
For Life can trust the lover with high truth.

Pregnant are poems from a faithful mind
Hymning realities for song to bind;
Alive come offspring to the artist's hands
Who like a lover before nature stands.

Gone are the Caesars with the Age of Gold
When naught was sacred and all eyes grown bold.
When crazed by slaughter of virility
Man turned to deify sterility.

Cubist Contre

One Roman loving life among such death
Gave earth a son who, symbolizing breath,
Hath outlived all sensation's sophistries:
Ever the dying Gladiator dies.

For by perfection birth to live is brought,
And by perfection subtle art is wrought;
Around the Dying Gladiator's pain
A crowded Coliseum shouts again.

For he by whom this marble was subdued
To human form, and then with death imbued,
Letting perfection move through every part,
Gave to his boy in stone a throbbing heart.

AT ST. WITTA'S TOMB

(WHITCHURCH, DORSET)

HIGH on a stony sanctity
More like an altar than a grave,
St. Witta lies and hears the wave
Which ripples out of France.

They brought her bones across the sea
When warring knights made clerics brave,
And to this little Norman nave
Bequeathed her holy trance.

At St. Witta's Tomb

Here hath time built a canopy,
Ten hundred years an architrave,
Some peace the little saint doth save
From impious mischance.

What were her earthly years? Was she
A martyr to a Norseman's glaive;
Did priests work wonders at her grave
When high faith loved romance?

This shrine is silent history :
Her name is all the years engrave,
She lies a shell left by a wave
Adventuring in from France.

IN MY GARDEN

BENEATH the sweet virgilia tree
I watched a saint arise.
What time the boughs were veiled in bloom
That seemed from Paradise.

The saint laid blossoms to her cheek,
God knows which shone most white,—
And cried, "O little tree, I dreamt
About you yesternight.

In my Garden

"I dreamt the Lord God spoke in Heaven
Saying, ' My child, a tree
Doth shroud to-night the song of souls
Which know felicity.'

"These grape-like flowers in my dream
Were beckoning to me;
While from an inner fragrance sang
A golden-bodied bee."

Then swaying clusters hid the saint
Deeper beneath their screen.
The petals dropped where stood her feet
Made snow of summer's green.

And low I heard her voice of faith,
"Sting, little bee! thy part
It is to teach the song of souls,
Sting close above my heart."

LAMENT

MY words contained a clot of blood,
A thing which nature hides,
And they who reading understood
Saw nothing else besides.

Lament

Oh, quickening lines of brave despair
Did I then do you wrong,
By letting all we suffered there
Be shrouded in my song?

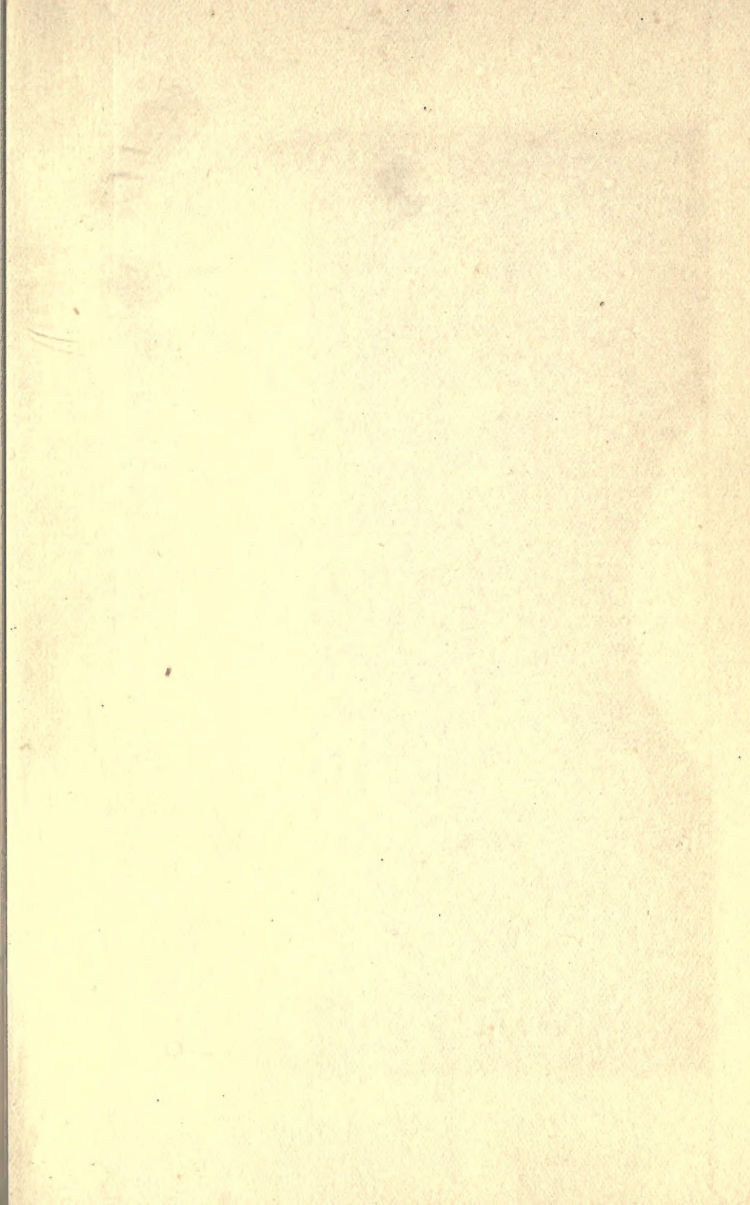
Should I have buried far beneath
The wound another gave,
And only shown a piteous wreath
Of rhymes upon a grave?

Then many passing would have wept
Remembering their sorrows;
Thus sympathy alive is kept
By woe man gently borrows.

But I the clot of blood revealed
And none will read again;
Forgive me words to silence sealed,
Forgive me, lost refrain.



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Aldrich, Margaret Chanler

The horns of chance, and other poems.

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